Preface

The present thesis is an attempt to study the nature and dynamics of the party system in Manipur during the period from 1972 to 1985. The purpose of the work is not to give a historical and descriptive account of individual political parties inside the state dealing with their genesis, aims and objectives, organizational structure, success or failure in electoral politics, etc. Instead, it tries to focus on the inter-party relationship inside the political system of the state by taking the individual parties as elements standing in interaction among them. This has been done with a view to understand the basic features of the party system that has emerged in Manipur during this period. The relationship of the political parties inside the state is being examined here at three different levels - 1) at the level of the relationship between the Ruling and the Opposition, 2) at the level of the relationship among the partners of the coalition ministries and 3) at the level of the relationship among the parties in Opposition. On the basis of these
examinations, certain generalizations are made about the party system inside the state.

The study starts from 1972. This was the year when Manipur got statehood and a responsible government was established in the state for the first time since her merger into India. The establishment of a legislative assembly having sixty seats facilitated a new impetus to the traditions of parliamentary practices along the lines of elections through party competition and establishment of a responsible government by the elected representatives of the people. On the other hand, the study was decided to cover up to the year 1985. It was a landmark year in the sense that 52\textsuperscript{nd} Constitution Amendment Act, 1985 came into force in this year. It was major step towards curving the problem of defection which has plagued parliamentary democracy in India. Besides, the period from 1972 to 1985 witnessed as many as ten ministries. Therefore, it was felt that it will be a reasonable to be covered for such a study.

The present thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is the Introductions. It tries to examine party
system from a theoretical point of view. The main focus here is on the meaning of political parties, their genesis, functions they perform, their classification, relationship with the political system, etc. It also examines the concept of party system as being understood in the context of the present research work, the different types of party system like that of the one party system, bi-party system and multi-party system along with their relative merits and demerits.

The main focus of the second chapter is on the emergence of political parties in Manipur. To present this against a proper historical backdrop, an attempt has been made to trace the growth of political consciousness among the people during the British period along with brief highlights of the important episodes during the colonial history of Manipur like that of the First (1904) and the Second (1939) Nupi Lan, the Kuki Rebellion (1917-18) and the Zeliangrong Movement (1930-32), etc. These events gave great impetus to the growth of political consciousness among the people. It also highlights the socio-economic and political reform movements during the 1930s and the
middle of the 1940s which witnessed the emergence of a number of political parties in Manipur like the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha (1938), Manipur Praja Sanmelani (1940), Manipur Praja Mandal (1946), Krishak Sabha (1946), Manipur Praja Sangha (1946), Manipur State Congress (1946), etc.

The main focus of the third chapter is the relation between the Ruling and the Opposition parties. It tries to understand the nature and dynamics of the relationship between the two. This has been done in the context of the ten ministries which were there during the period from 1972 to 1985. It highlights the tussle for power between the two; the impact which the chronic problem of defection, and the inter-party and intra-party conflict had on the nature of the relationship between the two; the resultant features of the relationship between the two, etc.

The fourth chapter deals with the relationship which parties in different coalition ministries shares among them. During the period from 1972 to 1985, there were four state assembly elections. However, the verdict of the people every
occasion was a fragmented one and none of the parties won a majority of the seats in the assembly. This naturally meant a number of coalition ministries right from the very beginning. In fact, out of the ten ministries during this period, eight were coalition ministries. This chapter tries to examine the motive of the parties while joining hands to form a coalition ministry, the nature of the relationship they share among themselves, the various factors which led to the breakdown of the ministries like struggle for leadership, the inter-party and intra-party conflicts, tendency of the larger parties in the coalition to absorb the smaller ones, the chronic problem of defection and its impact on the government and the party system, etc. are also being examined here.

The main focus of the fifth chapter is the nature and dynamics of the relationship shared by the parties in Opposition. Except on one occasion, the composition of the Opposition during the period being covered by the study has always been a heterogeneous one. This chapter highlights the fluid and unstable nature of the composition of the
Opposition, their failure to evolve a meaningful relationship among themselves as parties in Opposition and ultimately their failure in emerging as healthy, vibrant and meaningful institution of parliamentary democracy, their preoccupation with opportunities to cross over to the other side due to their all consuming lust for power or ministerial berths, etc.

The final chapter is a systematic summarization of the findings of the previous chapters with a view to give a comprehensive picture about the party system which emerged in Manipur during the period from 1972 to 1985, along with reflections on the future prospects of the party system inside the state.

At one level, the study is designed to be a historical and descriptive account of the party system which has evolved in Manipur during the period from 1972 to 1985. As such, related materials available in the libraries, newspaper offices, the State Archives, Manipur State Government Secretariat Library, Manipur State Legislative Assembly Library, state Election Office, Manipur University Library,
etc. have been extensively combed. Apart from these sources, relevant materials in a number of Party Offices like that of the Congress (I), CPI and MPP have also been consulted. One difficulty faced while collecting materials for the research was that of the burning down of the Manipur State Legislative Assembly building, Manipur Central Library and Congress (I) party office, etc. in June 2001. This led to the destruction of priceless records available in these places and has considerably hampered the progress my research work right from the very beginning.

At another level, the study has also been designed to be a critical analysis and assessment of the nature and dynamics of the party system during this period. This has been done by examining, as Duverger pointed out, "the forms and modes of their coexistence", as evident from three aspects of the relationship the parties share in state politics - 1) between the Ruling and Opposition parties, 2) among coalition partners and 3) among parties in Opposition.